

WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. A contact center comprising:

a local area network;

a first switching apparatus for connecting to at least one public network, the switching

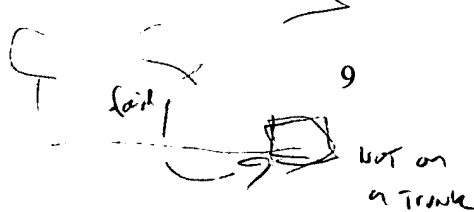
apparatus being configured to communicate over the local area network; and

a plurality of contact center resources for processing and servicing said contacts, a first subset of the contact center resources being configured to interface with the switching apparatus via the local area network, and a second subset of said contact center resources being configured to interface with the switching apparatus via a Private Branch Exchange (PBX).

2. The contact center of claim 1 wherein a plurality of said first switching apparatus are all connected to said local area network and are arranged to communicate with each other over said local area network.

3. The contact center of claim 2 wherein the first switching apparatus is configured so that capacity utilized to communicate with others of said first switching apparatus is not used to communicate with said contact center resources.

4. The contact center of claim 2 wherein each of said first switching apparatus is connected to a prescribed set of trunks, and wherein there is a number M of additional first switching apparatus that are not connected to said trunks, and wherein said center is arranged to detect the failure of any one of said first switching apparatus connected to said trunks and to reroute said prescribed trunks



to one of said M first switching apparatus upon detection of such failure.

5. The contact center of claim 4 wherein M is 1.

5 6. A contact center comprising:

a plurality of switches, each of said switches being configured to interface contact center resources to a public network to facilitate the processing and servicing of contacts, each of said switches also being configured to interface with others of said switches, the communications capacity within each switch used to communicate with others of said switches being separate from and unusable as the capacity used to connect resources to the public network.

10 7. A contact center comprising a PBX connected to a plurality of contact center agent stations and to a switching apparatus, the PBX causing the contact center agent ^(contact centers) stations to be in communications with the switching apparatus, the switching apparatus also being in communications with other contact center agent stations over a local area network. [the functionality implemented by 15 connecting the switching apparatus to the agents via the PBX being the same as the functionality implemented by connecting the switching apparatus to the agents via the local area network.] 2nd

20 8. A contact center comprising a plurality of switching apparatus for routing contacts from a public network to contact center resources, a subset of the switching apparatus being assigned a plurality of communications channels for interfacing with a public network,

at least one backup switching apparatus, and

means for detecting when one of the switching apparatus is faulty, and for rerouting channels normally serviced by the faulty switching apparatus to a backup switching apparatus for service, the backup apparatus being configured to service any of the faulty switching apparatus which is detected as failing.

9. A method of expanding a contact center's capacity and adding agents comprising the steps of:

connecting additional agents to a switching means through a PBX until the PBX runs out of capacity and then connecting additional agents to the switching means over a local area network.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the local area network is an ATM switch.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the local area network is an Ethernet.

12. A switching arrangement for connecting contacts to agents for servicing such contacts in a contact center, the switching arrangement comprising:

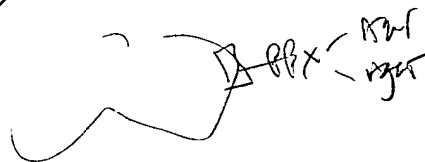
a PBX, the PBX having a plurality of ports, each port being connected to a separate agent terminal and having a separate PBX extension,

a switch connected to a public network and to the PBX, the switch including a plurality of switch ports and means for permanently connecting each agent to a separate switch port by dialing the PBX extension of the agent connected to said switch port, and

means for routing each contact through the switch and PBX from the public network to an agent, and for servicing the contacts, irrespective of the type of contact.

13. The switching arrangement according to claim 12 wherein said switch includes means for allowing agents to logon or register, and wherein upon said logon or registration, said switch dials an agent through said PBX and maintains a connection from said switch to said agent through said PBX.

computer fig 3



14. A contact center comprising a plurality of agent terminals, each connected to a PBX, the PBX having a plurality of ports for connection to a public network, all of such ports being connected to a second switching arrangement, the second switching arrangement and the agent terminals also being in communication via a local area network.

not first



15. The switch of claim 12 further comprising means for maintaining a connection to an agent while performing at least one of the following telephony functions: hold, transfer, conference, record, playback.